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To

Talks. on. Can. Art.

Alma Savare.

CONCLUSION

In our last talk this afternoon on Canadian Art I would like to spend a little time in gathering up the main points discussed and looking at the Art situation to-day and our relation to it.

I tried to show in outline the growing tradition of our country's painting - rooted in the history of Western art generally but strengthened and invigorated by the men and women who have practised it in this Dominion. We have seen it struggling to develop its own form of expression from the early days of the pioneer Kane with his Indians and the more domestic story-telling Kreighoff and his French-Canadian life down to the sensitive beauty of J.W. Morrice's paintings of winter in old Montreal and Quebec, bringing French impressionism to our doors. Then followed the struggle against the domination of European influences which tied so many Artists and buyers of Art down to conventional and stereotyped paintings, and finally the appearance of Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven, who broke through the prejudices and established the Canadian viewpoint. To-day that Group has developed into the larger society of the Canadian Group of Painters, embracing the artists scattered through the country who have responded to the same ideals of creative work. (I have only had time to stress the major figures: there are many others.)

The difficulty facing those who became inspired by the work of the Group of Seven was that they might merely follow in their well-trodden paths and contribute nothing vital of their own. However, that has not proved to be so. The main interest of the Group of

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Seven was in landscape. But to-day when Canadian life has many sides, when the teeming cities and industrial centres make us part of the universal modern world the honest creative artist is interpreting that life wherever he finds himself. The first development gave us the country. The field is now much wider. It covers the city too.

Figure painting is becoming more important. Amongst the men we have people like Edwin Holgate, Charles Comfort, Jack Humphrey, André Beiler, John Lyman and others, working in this field. There is still so much that can be done in the way of developing types.

All the painters I have discussed have been men but Canada has produced a remarkable group of women painters as well. For example, there is EMILY CARR of Victoria who has for years painted the Indian country of the west coast. All by herself she ventured with her pet sheep-dog into the interior of British Columbia and lived in the Indian villages, and as a result has been able to carry out a fine interpretation of the Totem poles and the jungle-like foliage of that mist-ridden country. For a long time her interesting canvases received little or no encouragement.

Then there is PRUDENCE HEWARD of Montreal who has a very individual form of expression in figure as well as landscape painting. She has used French Canadians in farm settings, painted them with a fine, strong directness, firmly modelled, rich in colour and beautifully and powerfully designed. Her painting of the country around Brockville with the dark red barns and silver silos among the deep greens of summer and her Bermuda canvases of tropical growth and bronzed figures are full of a rich somnolence.

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LILIAS TORRANCE NEWTON is one of our portrait painters. Her work possesses a fine sensitiveness to the character of the subject and she has the happy faculty of seizing upon the essentials. Her technical ability is under complete control and her delicate feeling for colour harmonies makes her portraits not only interpretive of the individual but works of rare beauty.

There are many others: SARAH ROBERTSON, ISOBEL McLAUGHLIN, KAY DALY, PARASKEVA CLARKE, MABEL MAY, KATHLEEN MORRIS, ETHEL SEATH, NORA COLLYER. YVONNE McKAGUE HOUSSER, MARION SCOTT, RODY KENNY COURTICE, to name a few, all working to interpret Canadian motives in a creative way.

Another field, which I have not been able to touch, of Canadian Art besides Painting is that of sculpture which demands so much technical and physical skill for its execution. The names of Frances Loring and Florence Wyle and Elizabeth Wynn Wood are outstanding here. I wish I could take you to the delightful studio in Rosedale, Toronto, of Miss Loring and Miss Wyle and show you a little red Church which has been fashioned into a studio. A great figure thirty feet high stands in the centre, a Hockey Player, a Goal Keeper, by Frances Loring; across the room an Indian woman with a papoose on her back by Florence Wyle; reliefs of bird-life, flowers and animals are to be found among fine models of figures. Miss Loring has just finished a series of Indian figures in complete tribal dress for the National Gallery. Elizabeth Wood is now erecting the War Memorial for Welland, Ontario.

But most of us are even more unaccustomed to looking at sculpture than painting. The appreciation of this art is as a consequence

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very primitive. But as our sculptors continue to create and a few institutions and individuals purchase their work the general level of understanding will no doubt rise.

We find creative artists working in the educational centres, - to-day in Montreal at the Art Association we have a school under the guidance of Edwin Holgate, Lillias T. Newton and Will Ogilvie; and the Ecole des Beaux Arts, Montreal, with Mr. Maillard in charge.

At Queens University there is an Art Department run by André Beiler.

Winnipeg has a school directed by that very sensitive artist, Lemoine Fitzgerald.

The Vancouver School is under the direction of Charles H. Scott.

The Ontario College of Art, of which Fred Haines is principal, and the Art Department of the Central Tech. in Toronto under Peter Haworth, are two of the most important schools in Canada.

Ottawa has Art classes working under Fred Varley and Mabel May.

An outstanding figure in the development of appreciative education is the Warden of Hart House, Mr. Bickersteth. Through his foresight and understanding Toronto has in the centre of the University housed in Hart House, the finest collection of modern Canadian painting in this country, and it serves as a stimulating centre to the youth of the University. The latest addition to this collection has been the fine mural paintings in the Chapel by Will Ogilvie. Exhibitions of contemporary work are constantly on view there also.

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Great credit is due to Messrs Eric Brown and Harry McCurry of the National Gallery for their untiring zeal in promoting everything that was genuine in the country, and men like the Hon. Vincent Massey and Mr. Harry Southam of Ottawa who through their systematic purchase of good canvases have built up fine collections of Canadian painting and made it possible for the artists to continue to produce and to-day in London Mr. Massey as High Commissioner has been able to take to the Old Country a vision of the land he represents.

And this brings us back to our final discussion of what painting shall we choose for our empty wall space. But, you say, I am not an artist: how can I choose what I need?

We may not all be artists, but we are really all potential artists and we can all be actively interested and derive great pleasure and enjoyment from Art. Art and the way of Art permeates the world in which we live.

There is a term which causes us a lot of confusion in the Art world to-day, and that is the term 'Creative Art'. It is merely another name to distinguish the interpretive artist from the artist who merely copies material in a photographic way.

The creative artist as he too looks out upon the world sees objects and people and incidents as forms and grasps their significance both outward and inward - he intuitively builds up these forms and sensations to create his work of Art.

If we are interested we, too, can learn to look at the world in this creative way.

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Thus everything we look at from the small objects about our rooms to skyscrapers and mountains and trees, we see as forms and units of forms which give us far greater sense of their reality and significance than any exact copy of their appearance can give. To see the essential significant character of commonplace things is to transform what is mediocre, if not ugly, into something that is lovely and worth while, if we begin to see what we know how to look for.

So let us become interested in our own creative painters because they help us to understand these things and make us conscious of our background. They speak to us of the infinite beauties of our own land and times and re-create for our enjoyment its rich variety of creations - so that Canada may rise above mere material values to the higher level of those of the mental and spiritual world.

What can we do about it? Join your local Art Society. If you haven't got one form one. Find out all you can about all artists of all times and then come back to your own and love them still more. Make the Arts your highway of adventure and create for yourself a world of sunlight and joy. Hang your walls with bits of Canada where the air is free and stirring and every time you look at them your own understanding and enjoyment will be enriched.

You know a picture is always at a disadvantage because it never knows who is looking at it. It cannot turn its face to the wall, but it can withhold its beauty from those not capable of seeing it. Let us be capable of seeing and let us pay a tribute to those who have and are preserving for us in paint "the strong sweet spirit of this land of mountain and river, of prairie and sun."

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I hope that these short talks may have helped to stimulate your interest in our Canadian artists. There is so much that I have not even mentioned - art as it affects our town streets, the use of murals, public monuments and open spaces, parks and squares - the decoration of books and so on. But these are pleasant roads from which you can make your own choice; once the appetite is awakened you need never be afraid of indulging it, or expect to satisfy it.

If you should wish to follow for yourself much fuller accounts than I could give you, I would like to leave this list of books which I know you would enjoy:

"The Wanderings of an Artist" - Paul Kane.

"Cornelius Krieghoff" - Marius Barbeau.

"A Canadian Art Movement" - by F.B.Housser.

"Biography of J.W. Morrice" - Donald Buchanan.

"The Life of Tom Thomson" - Blodwin Davies - published by Ryersons

"Collected Poems, West by East" - J.E.H. MacDonald.

The late Mr. Albert Robson has written an excellent series of Lives of our Canadian painters. The series includes, in a small edition beautifully illustrated, Kane, Krieghoff, Thomson, Gagnon, J.E.H. MacDonald and A.Y. Jackson. Then there is a book of general interest on the study of the arts, "Understanding the Arts", by Helen Gardner. It will give you in a very delightful way an appreciation of the principles of building, sculpture and painting - something we all should have before we can fully appreciate the same activities in our own land.

——— Thank you.